

Introduction

The Anglican Chant Psalter provides congregations and choirs with a method of singing the psalms using Anglican chant; this method underlies the sense of the words and the rhythm of well-modulated speech.

Psalms are hymns or songs. The *Harvard Dictionary of Music* says, "In their original form the psalms were not pure poetry but songs, perhaps with instrumental accompaniment." Following the authorization of *The Book of Common Prayer* 1979, with its restoration of psalms in the Eucharist, the practice of singing the psalms has grown in churches in the United States. Singing leads to a unanimity of sound or utterance which is seldom found in reading and thus provides a corporate expression which is at the heart of public worship.

Ray Brown in his introduction to *The Oxford American Psalter* speaks of chant as:

"a development of the monotone. . . Plain chant came first. It was related to the musical pattern of the age in which it originated. The Anglican chant came much later and is related to the modern musical pattern. . . A psalm chant (Anglican or Gregorian) is a short, simple, flexible piece of music for the singing of unmetrical poetry, especially the psalms and canticles, in such a manner that the free, irregular rhythm of the words can be preserved in the singing. . ."

In the Psalter each verse is divided by an asterisk (*). The first syllable or syllables of each line are monotoned on the first note of the chant until the sign (!) indicates that the second and third notes of the chant are now sung. Two or more syllables sung to one note are indicated by a bracket (—) and when one syllable is sung to two notes the indication is two dots (""). The next (!) indicates that the fourth note of the chant is now sung. Occasionally the reciting (or monotoned) note is omitted and this is indicated at the beginning of a line in the following way: "—|¹everything they¹ do shall¹ prosper." A breath is usually taken at the asterisk. A breath is usually taken also at the end of a line [unless the sense of the words suggests that the lines be continuous.] Rhetorical commas but not grammatical ones are observed as the sense would require in good reading. A dagger (†) indicates that a verse is sung to the second half of a double chant. The syllable "ed" at the end of a word is not to be pronounced separately except in obvious cases like "regarded" and "blessed."

Professor Brown in his introduction speaks helpfully and practically about chanting:

"Good monotoning is the basis of good chanting, but good monotoning is not to be had without attention and practice. The three steps in learning to chant a verse in good style are: (1) reading, (2) monotoning, and (3) chanting. After the standard of intelligibility has been set by deliberate reading, monotoning seems easy, but its apparent simplicity is deceiving.

"The reason it requires so much attention is that in singing, as compared with speaking, the tone is more sustained, and the vowels generally are lengthened; but actually, singers without training in this will clip certain syllables of primary accent, with the result that they fail to take their proper stress. Syllables most likely to suffer this fault are those with short vowels and those ending in l, m, n, or v. The remedy is simply to lengthen such syllables just enough so that they will take the stress required by the sense of the words. The best way to deal with the syllables ending in these consonants is to delay the pronunciation of the consonants enough to give the vowel a chance to take its stress. (Examples: let, lips; soul, come, son, love; fill, him, sin, sing, live.).

Another serious fault peculiar to singing consists in giving a strong accent to a final weak syllable whenever such a syllable occurs at a point where a break is made for breath, as at the end of a verse or half verse. This distortion of sound and sense plagues all singing, whether it be monotoning, Anglican chanting, Gregorian chanting, or any other form of vocal music, and whatever language is used; but the first and best place to be aware of it and correct it is in

monotoning. A final weak syllable (or note) is called a ["weak"]. . . ending. In English about half of all phrases and sentences have. . . such endings, and it is of the utmost importance that its natural gracefulness should be preserved in chanting. The first or second syllable preceding the weak ending always takes either a primary or a secondary stress, and the first step in correcting the fault is to see that the strong syllable is given its proper stress. The weak syllable should be lengthened slightly to prevent it from becoming inaudible and to add to the gracefulness of the termination. A final secondary accent, also, must be subordinated to the preceding primary accent: "Worship the Lord in the ¹beauty of ¹holiness." There is no difficulty with. . . strong endings. It should be realized that, when the distinction between strong and weak endings is brought out, a lovely sort of variety is given to this music which is so often accused of being monotonous.

"Certain other faults common to speaking and singing can best be corrected by giving attention to monotoning. Articulation of consonants should be made very clear. Words of three or more syllables should be pronounced fully and deliberately and not snapped out (heartily, righteousness, enemies). When vowels occur in juxtaposition as 'we are' and 'he is,' they must not be allowed to merge; and when the first is stronger than the second, the tendency to move the accent from the first to the second must be withstood. A comma should be observed by prolonging the preceding syllable enough to make the sense clear (but its length should not be more than doubled), and not by a choppy break in the flow or the words. When two strong syllables are in juxtaposition, the first of the two should be lengthened ('great King'). When a weak syllable comes at the end of a recitation, just before the inflection begins, care must be taken not to lengthen or emphasize it at all ("For the Lord is a ¹gr^{eat} ¹God").

"The pace of the recitation is determined by the two opposing requirements of clarity and fluency; on the one hand, all details of pronunciation should be explicit with pure vowels, clear consonants, and right accentuation; and on the other hand, the movement should be quick and flexible. Attention to clarity will keep the tempo from being too fast, and attention to fluency will keep it from being too slow.

"In English the vowels are not all of equal length. If the foregoing principles, especially the careful pronunciation of consonants, are observed in chanting, the syllables will be more nearly equal in duration than they are in normal speech. But the syllables should not be made exactly equal in duration, as is sometimes wrongly done in plainsong psalm chanting in English."

(From The Oxford American Psalter by Ray F. Brown. Copyright 1949 by Ray F. Brown; renewed 1976 by Andrew Brown and Stuart Brown. Reprinted by permission of Oxford University Press, Inc.)

Dr. Brown's introduction has been quoted at length because it is to the point and the singing in the chapel at The General Theological Seminary reflected his careful teaching.

Anglican Chant was designed to be sung in four-part harmony unless specifically indicated otherwise. In this book each psalm is given two chants. The first is intended for congregational use and the second for use by a carefully trained choir. In some parishes it may be possible for the congregation to sing certain choral chants, especially after having heard them sung by the choir several times. When a church has such a choir a psalm may be sung to either the first or second setting as a short anthem or during the communion of the people at the Eucharist or perhaps as a prelude to the service. The work of contemporary composers is well represented in this volume.

In accompanying chant the accompaniment serves to maintain pitch. Rhythmic leadership must come from the singers. The organ registers for Anglican Chant should be clear but unobtrusive and 16-foot pedal tone should be sparingly used. If choir and congregation are very secure in their singing, the accompanist may improvise descant forms of the chant or occasionally leave the voices unaccompanied. The accompaniment, as indeed the dynamics of the singing, may reflect the changing mood and meaning of the psalm but should at all costs avoid becoming theatrical.

Alec Wyton
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Performance Notes

Singing the Chant

Good chanting is good singing. Chant is a musical medium for the clear and expressive singing of liturgical texts. Word accents create the rhythm in chant, and the lines and verses of the text determine the shape of the chant's musical phrase. Single-line melodic chant should be sung as song, whether lyrical or declamatory, as the words require. Harmonized chant is best sung with the same care one would give to the singing of harmonized folk or art song, with constant attention to the rhythm and phrasing of the text.

In singing all chant, special attention must be paid to the words sung to the reciting note or chord. The recitation must not be rushed and should be governed by the rhythm and flow of the words. Mediant cadences (the musical change at mid-point) and final endings or cadences should never slow down or speed up, creating a false metrical effect. The established and recurring tempo of the recitation remains the same throughout the chant, including the intonation, reciting notes, and the mediant and final cadences. On the other hand, the text is not to be sung with a mechanical, unbending pulse. Certain words will be gently moved along; others will be prolonged. Care is to be taken, however, not to sing the text with unnatural dotted rhythms.

Unaccented words or syllables at the beginning of lines should be treated as anacrustic, moving directly to the first primary accent. In general, accents should be created by lengthening the word or syllable (agogic accent) rather than by a sudden dynamic stress. Tempo and dynamics are to be determined by the meaning of the text, the number of singers, and the size and resonance of the space where they are singing.

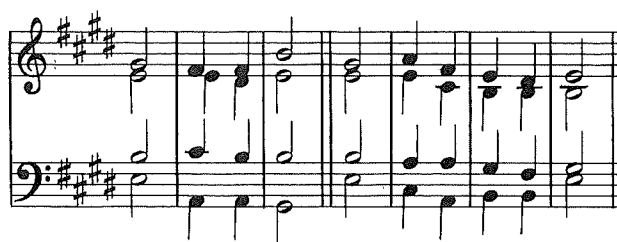
If singers read the text in an expressive but not exaggerated manner, and then sing the words to the chant with the same rhythmic flow, they will discover how chant can unify the Christian community's singing of liturgical texts.

Harmonized (Anglican) Chant

The chant known as anglican chant developed from harmonized plainsong psalm tones (fauxbourdon) and from festal psalm settings by late sixteenth and early seventeenth century English composers. During the following centuries the daily singing of Prayer Book psalms to anglican chant became normal practice in English cathedrals, collegiate churches and chapels, and in many parish churches. Anglican chant psalm singing is still widely practiced throughout the Anglican Communion. The singing of the invitatory psalm and canticles to anglican chant became a widespread practice in the Episcopal Church and remains popular in many parishes.

A single chant is usually composed of ten chords—a reciting chord followed by a mediant cadence of three chords, and a second reciting chord followed by five chords which make up the final cadence or ending. The chant thus reflects the usual parallel construction of the canticles or psalms. The first half of each verse is sung to the first part of the chant. The second reciting chord and final cadence carry the remainder of the text following the asterisk. A double chant is twice as long, and two verses of a canticle or psalm are sung to double chants. *The Anglican Chant Psalter* also includes some triple chants.

Because of its fixed design, anglican chant requires the text to be marked ("pointed"), so that certain syllables may be sung to particular notes of the music. The pointing used in *The Anglican Chant Psalter* matches primary verbal stresses with musical ones. Musical stress is assumed to occur on the second, fourth, sixth, eighth, and tenth chords of the chant:



Syllable of primary stress have been, in most cases, assigned to these chords. This results in endings of varying lengths. Such endings add diversity to the chanting experience. They also invite fuller participation by congregations and choirs who will find their singing more consistent with their speaking.

Five marks indicate the pointing:

^l always occurs before a stressed syllable to be sung to the second, fourth, sixth, eighth, and tenth chords of the chant. Thus its placement corresponds to the bar lines in the chant.

— connects two syllables (occasionally three) to be sung to one chord.

** identifies one syllable to be sung to two chords.

— indicates that the reciting chord is to be omitted.

† indicates that the second half of a double chant is to be sung to this verse. When occurring during the use of a triple chant, indicates the use of the third section.

The musical notation is purely conventional and defines pitch but not duration. The notes have no rhythmic value in themselves and the text alone determines the rhythm. In the past the usual notation was in whole and half notes, with passing notes, when included, notated in quarter notes. *The Anglican Chant Psalter* uses half and quarter notes (with passing notes as eighth notes), providing greater ease in reading.

Passing notes (see chants #12, #143 and #281) may be treated in either of the following ways:

1. The last syllable before the bar line is always assigned to the passing notes, or
2. When the last syllable before the bar line is accented it is sung to the passing note, but when it is unaccented, the first syllable following the bar line is anticipated and the passing note is slurred to the following note.

Breath is always taken at the end of a line and after a colon or semi-colon in the middle of a line. A comma is always observed only as required in good reading and not by a complete break.

When singing anglican chant settings of canticles and psalms, particular care should be taken to make sure that the rhythm, sense, and mood of the words govern the tempo, dynamics, and style of the singing. At no time should the harmonic rhythm of the mediant cadence and ending be superimposed on the natural flow of the text. Care must be taken to guard against rushing words sung to reciting chords and slowing down to a measured rhythm at the mediant cadence and at the ending. Even though anglican chant developed as a medium for the four part choral singing of the psalms, many congregations have found that the singing of canticles and psalms to anglican chant is practical and gratifying. While the usual practice is for the congregation to sing the melody of the chant in unison, part singing is strongly encouraged. The choir, organ, or other instruments lead by singing and playing all four parts with an occasional verse in unison. Some contemporary chants are written to be sung in unison supported by the instrumental accompaniment.

The organ is the normal instrument for the accompaniment of anglican chant, but other keyboard instruments may be used. It is possible to add an occasional instrumental or choral descant to some chants. All parts are to be played. The accompanist should memorize the chant so that complete attention can be given to the words. Organ registrations should be firm, but not overwhelming. The organ should provide adequate support for congregational singing without obscuring the articulation of the text. Reeds and other color stops may add dramatic emphasis in certain verses. The pedal is used, especially for congregational singing, but may be omitted in some verses, all four parts being played on the manuals only. When congregation and choir are singing securely and confidently, it is refreshing to have appropriate verses sung unaccompanied.

When use of the Gloria Patri is indicated by *The Book of Common Prayer*, it should be sung to the last chant used in a particular setting, except where noted otherwise. The following pointing for Gloria Patri may be used.

Glory to the Father, and¹ to the¹ Son, *
and¹ to the¹ Holy¹ Spirit:

As it was in the be¹ginning, is¹ now, *
and¹ will be for¹ ever. A¹ men.